

RESTON CONNECTION (VA)
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CIA Backs Off On New Tower

By DAVID LERMAN

THE CONNECTION •

The Central Intelligence Agency, reacting to community opposition, has backed off from an attempt to replace a telephone tower on Fox Mill Road near Reston with a larger microwave tower.

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The tower would have beamed data and other information to the planned offices that the CIA has rented at the Reston Corporate Center on Sunset Hills Road, just west of Reston Avenue. The CIA's decision to back off on the Fox Mill tower site is not expected to affect its plans to move to Reston.

Bell Atlantic Telephone, which had submitted the proposal to Fairfax County on behalf of the CIA, will withdraw its application, according to Frank W. Stearns, an attorney for Bell.

"They [the government] just told us our site is no longer necessary for their plans," Stearns said. "We are going to leave it as it is."

The decision means the Bell-owned site will retain its four-foot-wide tower supported by guy wires. The CIA proposal had called for Overseas Telecommunications Inc., a private contractor, to replace the Bell tower with one that would be 25 feet wide at the base and hold as many as six microwave dishes at the top.

The present tower is 205 feet high and the now-abandoned tower would have been 203 feet.

But height was not an issue in the controversy.

Centreville Supervisor Martha V. Pennino, who had assailed U.S. officials for their "arrogance" in selecting a residential site for the tower, said she was pleased with the CIA's decision to back down.

"I'm glad I dug in and held out," Pennino said. She said she met with a high-ranking CIA official Tuesday who told her the agency will not need the Fox Mill site.

"It wasn't necessary for national security," Pennino said. "That was just a ruse."

The CIA, which has never acknowledged its future Reston office complex or the tower proposal, would not confirm or deny the recent decision.

Overseas Telecommunications, which has been working on the tower proposal for the CIA, would not say what other sites it is considering. But Dan Wallace, tower project manager, said in an earlier interview that the Fox Mill Road site was the only location suitable for the CIA in or near Reston.

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"There has been an awful lot of pressure on these [government] people to look somewhere else," said Centreville Planning Commissioner John H. Thillmann, a strong and vocal opponent of the Fox Mill Road site plan. "I'm just glad the government has decided that maybe the citizens were right all along. It was a real intrusion into a residential area."